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ABSTRACT

Outstanding community based work now going on in Vermont schools is described in this booklet which also suggests ways to develop similar work in other communities. The term "Community Studies" is used to encompass a broad range of activities carried out with the local community as the focus of and location for students' work. The booklet discusses ways of obtaining program support from school administrators, parents, and the local community; outlines the wide variety of experiences possible in community based studies; and gives guidelines for planning successful field trips. The section titled "Community Studies Activities" describes 50 projects undertaken in Vermont schools that succeeded in the eyes of the teachers and children involved. Activity categories are local history, media, natural resources, mapping, technology, government and social services, student businesses, community service projects, physical education and health, and agriculture and forestry. Additional activities illustrate the techniques of shadowing, interviewing, and observing and describe ways in which teachers have used community studies to augment the regular curriculum. Final chapters cover student writing (often the most striking success of community oriented work), record keeping, and local and regional resources. (JE)

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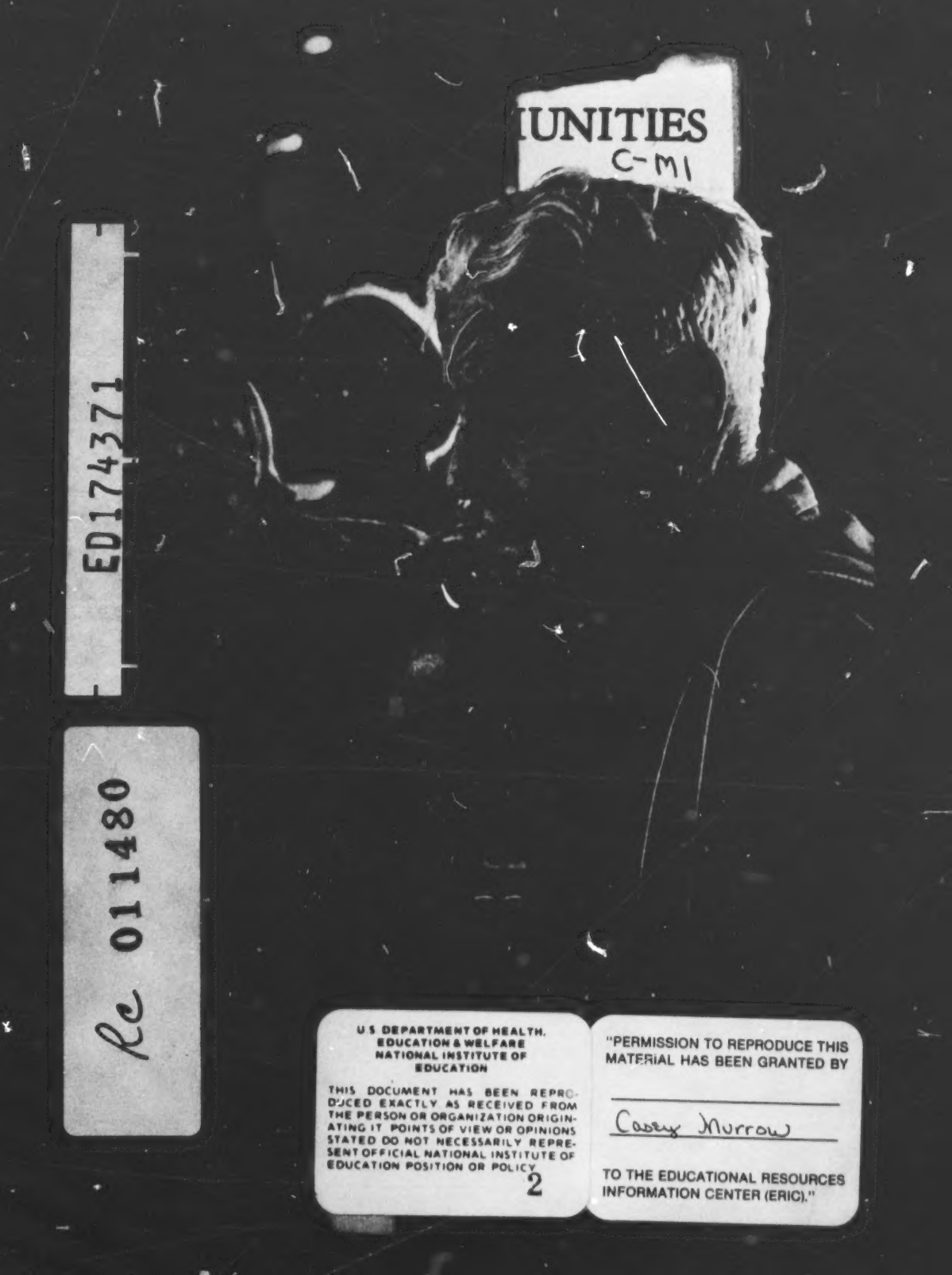

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Cover photo: Jock Sturges. Students interview a maple syrup producer in his sugar house.

Wilmington, Vermont. January, 1977.

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A GROWING IDEA

Our local communities in Vermont offer a vast resource for teachers and students who want to draw the world outside the school into the curriculum to make a richer and more useful experience for children. This booklet focuses on "Community Studies" as it is now practised in Vermont schools. It attempts to give the reader a view of some of the best community oriented work now going on in Vermont, collected by a team of teachers in Wilmington, where "Community Studies" has had growing emphasis. The specific activities from Vermont schools begin on page 19.

Our term, "Community Studies," is an attempt to find words that go beyond Career Education, Environmental Studies, Natural Science, Experiential Education, and other terms that apply to work inside and outside the school. Our experience suggests that many teachers engage in activities which extend beyond the conventional definitions of these terms.

Community Studies is a broad term within the curriculum, but it does suggest a sensible limitation outside the school: Make the local community the focus of some of the students' work. Let them understand from first hand experience what sorts of work are done in your town or find out which points of interest are most interesting to them in the community. Let them do traffic surveys as part of practical math or interview business people as part of a social studies unit. The possibilities are endless. This booklet is designed to give you some hints about what has already gone on in Vermont schools and to provide you with some suggestions for developing similar work in your own community.

In the Regular Curriculum:

Community Studies does not require that you teach in any one fashion. Vermont schools are fortunate to have fine teachers with many points of view about how thay will run their classrooms and arrange the curriculum. Community Studies programs may start on a very small scale and in only a limited aspect of the school program. Classroom teachers have begun community oriented work in many fields, based on their own interests. One elementary teacher we talked to in the last year uses the locality heavily for practical math assignments—measurements, mapping, scale drawings and work with metrics—but does little other work outside the school. Another uses the community for natural science projects—field trips to nature trails, studies of wildlife habitats. Both these teachers are helping

children to learn firsthand about elements of the world around them. As teachers, we cannot all do everything. We must capitalize on our own strong points in order to best serve the students whom we teach.

Motivation:

The effect of community oriented work that is mentioned almost universally by teachers is increased motivation among children. This is not surprising because the children are dealing with real-life situations in a part of the world that is generally familiar to them. What they learn from their work in the community they are likely to retain and to talk about with others. For example, a social studies unit based on commerce and transportation in a local area is likely to be much more interesting than a generalized textbook account of the same phenomena in another part of the United States. In this example, the children study businesses that are already somewhat familiar. They find out the routes of trucks they see passing by daily. They learn about the work of people they may have an acquaintance with.

No matter what our personal philosophies of education or how we want to run our classrooms, motivation of the children with whom we work is a constant concern. The disinterested child learns little. The child who is involved in his work begins to ask questions and to *study*, in the real sense of that word. Active work in our own localities often motivates children in ways that uninterrupted days in the classroom cannot. This is of vital concern to all teachers and to parents and administrators as well.

Appropriate Ages:

Community Studies has worked with children from pre-school through high school. The examples in this booklet are largely elementary and junior high work, but limits can hardly be imposed. The problems are usually to adapt a project to the age level you work with and, particularly for high school teachers, to schedule it. We have observed similar units on apple orchards, for example, done very simply for kindergarten children with great success and adapted for junior high students working on a science unit on the cultivation and growth of human food. The decision on whether a project is appropriate for your age group usually centers on the complexity of the material that has to be understood, the interests of that age group, and the issue of safety at the given site.

How Big Is "The Community"?

As teachers, we have usually introduced simpler material first, then taken the children on to more complex issues. The same approach works in defining the community. At first, it must be the local town or part of the town that is comprehensible to the children and accessi-

ble from the school. There is no point in beginning a study that might center on the Connecticut River or Lake Champlain if the students do not know where they live in relation to those areas. Community Studies can grow in geographic terms, out from the school, or they can grow in complexity, never getting too far from the school where the work is based. Sometimes transportation plays a part and students cannot travel far at all. In other cases, a legitimate project may involve a trip to a population center outside Vermont. In a broad sense, even the long trips must be put in focus for the students by relating what is learned on the trip to local conditions, but the finest Community Studies are often carried out within walking distance of a school and within an area of which the children already have some knowledge.

A potter readies a "pit firing" for students' clay pots.

The Best Subject Areas:

Community Studies fall naturally into the fields of Science and Social Studies, but they overlap many other areas and have surprising side effects. We have already mentioned a math program using the locality of a school. Of course, local history is a fascinating way to approach the community and this can involve a great deal of reading. Reading can be drawn heavily into any study of the community if the children can read the available material or if it can be modified for their use. Possibilities for art projects abound.

The most striking success of community oriented work, however, is often in writing. Students who have never written anything personal or honestly expressive of themselves will often do so after an experience

outside the school. Records of observations, interviews, and the collection of data all can be written down and provide important experiences in writing. Displays in the school, coupled with art work and collections of objects also require written explanations, sometimes taken as dictation from very young children, or involving extensive writing on the part of older students. A section on writing at the end of this booklet offers further suggestions along these lines.

What's in a Name?

Beware of any fancy terms for what you are doing. Community Studies has been a useful term for some of us working in the field, but it may not be an appropriate one for you. Many terms have been coined recently that relate in some way to community based learning. Two outstanding ones are Environmental Studies and Career Education. In some areas of the country either or both of those bring sharp reactions from people before they listen to what you have in mind.

Your own Community Studies may focus on natural science, math, journalism, language arts, social studies, or some other conventional area within the curriculum. Perhaps, in your case, it would be wise to use a conventional term and simply incorporate Community Studies into that aspect of the curriculum without throwing out a new term.

On the other hand, in some towns the idea of a program that focuses on the local community is intriguing and you may wish to use a new term to identify it. It is simply a matter for thought since the critical element is you, the teacher, not the labels you give to your work.

EXPERIENCES IN THE FIELD

Working outside the school is a major element of most Community Studies projects. In this section, we discuss some of the advantages and difficulties of field work in many Vermont schools.

Each field experience will be different, even if you are returning to the same place. The moment you venture outside the school, your planning must be thoughtful and extensive. Of course, no matter how carefully you tailor the experience, the unexpected will happen.

For many children, school never offers the unexpected—school is predictable in the pattern of its day and the routines that we all go through. Yet we must all learn to cope with change—with the unexpected. Thus, when some of your students are more interested in the equipment on a farm than they are in the cows which you had gone to observe, you may have gained something. When the man who promised you a tour of the factory forgets and is not there, don't give up. You will probably get someone equally as good or better by waiting a moment and asking for help.

There are several categories of field work to consider and plan for. We will view them in order of complexity and, at the end of this section, list some universal points to keep in mind.

On the School Grounds:

A project on school property is the easiest to organize. Usually no permission slips are required, but you may want to tell parents what is planned anyway. The project might involve studying an element of the immediate environment: finding the school on a county highway map (from District Engineer, Vermont Highway Department) and orienting the map using a compass. Or, you might have arranged for someone to demonstrate equipment at the school: the local fire department or a public utility crew. Whatever the arrangement, it should be simple, with an easy and quick return to the school for follow-up activities.

Within Walking Distance of the School:

Many of the finest trips are within walking distance and can be accomplished within a short space of time. If you limit yourself to short, walking trips in the beginning of the program, you may be surprised at the number of resources that you can explore with ease. The school in Wilmington where this booklet was edited sits nearly two miles from the village, on the edge of a large farm. The farm is a fine resource for many natural science projects and for projects on agricul-

ture, but when we began our work, we thought we would lack a variety of other possibilities. We were wrong.

A nearby service station offered contact with the manager, a wealth of information about automobiles and their owners, and data for traffic surveys. A backup of water behind a highway culvert offered us a fine pond life study area, while further down the same road was the home and garage of a logging truck operator. The natural areas near the school revealed more of their secrets year by year. A nearly overgrown farm road led to an old sugarbush and to the site of an abandoned sugarhouse, long since fallen to the ground. A small archeological dig begun there led to many finds that taught more about local history than any book could. Careful investigation of a small stream led to knowledge of watersheds and floods, while the vegetation in abandoned fields brought us to an understanding of field succession and the ways in which so much of Vermont has returned from field to forest.

The area around each school will differ greatly. Some town schools have very limited natural areas but are close to a wide variety of people and their work. It remains for us, the teachers, to discover what is available, plan out the experiences, and make them accessible to the children.

Local Field Trips, Using Transportation:

The short trip is usually preferable to a long period of time spent in a bus or car, but, regardless of the distance, we first need to be convinced that the trip merits the effort. A field experience, anywhere, should bear relation to the curriculum and offer something that can be brought back to the classroom—either tangible objects for display or notes, drawings, or photographs that can become the basis of a later project.

No matter how carefully the first trips are planned, students usually look upon them as some form of class picnic. Children need experience in working outside the school, as do teachers. We should not expect to be able to create a learning situation outside the school that will be very successful on the first try. For this reason, the first trips away from the environs of the school should not involve a great deal of travel. Often these trips are most successful when they go to a site that some of the children know well: a small factory where a parent works, an unusual natural area on the property of a child in the class. Many teachers who have made a practice of regular field work for their classes make an effort to orient the children to the site in advance. Using simple maps and brainstorming sessions, they review the route that will be taken and the sites along the way that the children know. This helps to avoid the problem of confusion in the children's minds about where they have traveled and, therefore, how they will relate what they see to the territory they know well, near their school and their home.

The Long-distance Trip:

There are many times when a long trip is appropriate, but it takes a great deal of commitment on the part of the faculty and the students involved. Great amounts of planning and, in many cases, fund raising, are necessary in order to proceed. The long trip, often involving a several night stay should be discussed with someone who has done the same trip before, if possible.

Despite the effort involved in the long trip, there are several general reasons for considering one for upper elementary or junior high students. Inevitably, the children will be introduced to an environment that is distinctly different from their own. Whether you go to a city or a rural setting, the exposure to a new place is of immense value. Equally important, the children will have an unusual living experience with one another and with their teachers. Very few classmates in elementary school have spent two full days together. Virtually none have had breakfast with their teachers, or sat and talked with them for awhile after supper. This experience, where all are thrown together in unfamiliar territory, can alter the fabric of relationships in the classroom for the rest of the year. From the teacher's point of view alone, you know the children and their lives in a way that is not possible when contact with them is limited to a six or seven hour school day.

FIELD TRIP DETAILS

Numbers:

Even if you have a great many adults available to you to supervise the group, you should not take large groups on field trips if you can avoid it. On long trips and visits to places that are equipped for large groups of 20 to 30 children, this may be the right choice. But in general, aiming at maximum group size of 12 is wise. The children will learn more and you will be more comfortable in leading them.

Faculty Support:

If you are going to work with a small group, what becomes of the rest of the class? Teachers have found many different ways to solve this problem. One of the most comfortable is to arrange a trade with a teacher near you. You might take some of his or her children for an hour and a half one day in trade for similar help the next time you wish to work with a small group. You may have access to aides or to parent volunteers who can take charge of children left in the class, or you may be able to get help from the school librarian or another staff member who has some flexible time in his or her schedule.

Administrative Support:

This issue is discussed in detail in another section, but there are some points that should be mentioned here. The principal should be in a position to work in classes on occasion. There is no reason that he or she cannot be called upon to assist in this area, allowing you to work with a small group. In many cases, the children left in the classroom are pleased, as well as worried, about having the principal in charge of their class for a period of time.

School Board Support:

In any form of Community Studies you become more visible in the community than you were when you arrived at school at 8 A.M. and didn't come out until 3 P.M. This visibility can be useful to you in your community and in your profession or, if it is mishandled, it can be a problem. It is very wise to keep a school board informed. It is also wise to call upon some of the members for help in your program, if you feel that is appropriate. Local policy will dictate what you have to do about getting permission to work in the community, but our evidence suggests that in most towns teachers can work within walking distance of the schools with no special difficulties, but that longer trips and related transportation problems often require enlisting specific school board support.

Put the Idea on Paper:

In approaching anyone for help, money, or time, it is wise to write your idea down. An administrator or school board member is much more likely to give you clear cut advice and decisions if the proposal is written down with a reasonable amount of detail.

Getting Parents' Permission:

Each school has its own set of rules for permission slips, but, in too many cases, the permission slip that is sent home says little or nothing about the educational value of the experience. Parents want to know what their child is doing, but they may also want to know why. It is easy to design a new form, or simply to type out an explanatory permission slip each time that you need one. Here is an example of how a teacher in Whitingham, Vermont, followed a field trip with an explanatory letter:

October 18, 1976

Dear Parents:

Last Wednesday our class had an excellent field trip to Bennington. Sometimes, it may seem to you that a field trip is a "day off" from lessons, but I hope that all of our trips are important parts of your child's total learning experience. For example, the following is a list of a few of the ways that our Bennington trip is helpful in the classroom:

1) LANGUAGE ARTS/READING - the students will be listening to and reading books about trains; each student made a "book" about the trip by drawing pictures and putting them in proper sequence before "binding" them; we made up a play about a train trip and used what we had learned about the jobs of being a ticket-seller, conductor, yard manager, engineer, fire tender, and freight handler; we learned about lantern signals used to direct the engineer (back up, stop, etc.) - this will lead us into further consideration of non-verbal communication - (for example, this week we are going to spend some time on Indian sign language).

2) MATH/SCIENCE - going up the Monument was a dramatic way to compare the heights of structures which the whole class has seen - (the castle and fire tower especially) - we made a graph of these structures; the various heights and weights we inquired about help the children understand the meaning of facts that otherwise would be very abstract - (for example, a box car is about 40 feet long, so it would hold the castle if the castle were put on its side; also, the bell we saw from an old engine weighs 220 pounds - something small can be heavier than something big).

3) SOCIAL STUDIES - we worked on directions (east, west, etc.) as we progressed on the trip and we used the park playground as a basis for beginning our work on simple maps (we reconstructed the playground on the classroom floor in miniature, then drew maps of it); we saw two old telephones and two old toy trains - these things help the children see how the everyday things around them now have not always been the same.

There are other ways in which this particular trip will be useful in the classroom and I can guarantee that there will be countless times during the year when someone will say, "Remember, we saw one of those at the . . . . . "

Again, thank you for your cooperation and support of our field trips.

Sincerely,

John Morris
Grade 1 Teacher

JM:jd

Transportation:

The most attractive form of transportation in most cases is a school owned van or small bus, however, many towns do not have such equipment. Some towns contract for their bus service, making it difficult to arrange for a bus on short notice and causing every use to have a large price tag attached to it. If your town does own its buses, it is worth the effort for at least one member of the faculty to obtain a Vermont school bus driver's license. This allows you the luxury of having a driver available in the school if his or her classes can be covered for the short period of time you may need the bus.

Using volunteers to drive on a trip is the most common means of getting around. This is cheap and relatively simple, but it does mean that you have to coordinate the whole effort and that you lose touch

with many of the kids during the trip. This can mean a lost opportunity for instruction, as you cannot point out items of interest or make unscheduled stops to look at things.

Insurance:

Sometimes teachers are told that a particular experience is impossible because, "the insurance doesn't cover it." In a few cases, this is true of school insurance policies, but most policies are written very broadly and cover a wide variety of possibilities. The insurance a school district carries is public information and certainly something that you have a right to obtain full details about.

Planning:

Do not hesitate to call upon as many people as you can to plan out the experiences you will offer your students. It may be appropriate to involve administrators, teachers who have done similar work before, and community people who have special knowledge of the area you want to go to. Your planning should include activities to precede the trip that will prepare the children for some of the experiences. These activities might involve reading and research for older students, or perhaps interviewing games to help younger children relax and ask questions of adults they will meet.

Follow-up Activities:

These, too, should be planned in advance, and then modified, based on what seemed most valuable in the actual experience. The key to successful follow-up is flexibility. The same assignment, given to the whole group will result in a few good pieces of work and many poor ones. It is vital to try to identify what it is that each child found most intriguing about a given visit and then to capitalize on that. A variety of activities should be possible. For example, it is easy to kill a child's interest in Community Studies by asking him or her to write a lengthy report as soon as he returns from every experience. This is the kind of predictable demand that will discourage many children from intense participation for fear that they will have to write about their interests.

Clothes:

Remember to think ahead about conditions where you are going. You may want to ask children to dress very nicely, or you may need to insist on boots and heavy clothes. If you are going outside during the school year, a sweater or jacket is *always* a good idea.

Food:

A nutritious snack for everyone will make a morning more enjoyable. If you are taking a box lunch or dinner, pack at least one extra. You are likely to find someone in need of it.

GETTING THE LOCAL SUPPORT YOU NEED

Community Studies is not a common part of the curriculum. The approaches advocated here are not generally known among people who are no longer in school, so that a teacher relying heavily on the community as a resource will have to do some educating beyond his or her own classroom.

No matter what sorts of work you are trying to accomplish in your school, lack of support from administrators can be a problem or even a complete roadblock. It is necessary to develop support from principals and superintendents early in your Community Studies program.

Amongst parents and administrators, the two most common worries are, first, about the unknown elements of the program—will the children be safe, where will they go, who will they meet—and, second, what is the academic value of the program? Teachers must plan to meet these two major issues.

The first problem—unknown elements—will require a reasonable amount of communication between teacher and principal. The principal needs to know all the aspects of your planning in the early stages. Perhaps he or she should be involved in your first few activities, either in the school or elsewhere in the community. Many principals have served as important support people, especially in field work. Many are pleased to be asked to take part in a valid project that will enhance learning amongst the children that you and the principal are jointly responsible for. Developing plans for Community Studies without the involvement of the principal is likely to result in problems with later approvals and support.

The parents also deserve a great deal of information and some will want to become involved personally. In one Vermont Community Studies program, every activity is preceded by a note to parents explaining what is going to take place and *why*. It is the experience of many teachers that if the parents know why something is planned and if it is explained in a sensible fashion, they are very likely to support it. In many cases, you can relate the Community Studies project to a specific aspect of the curriculum, pointing out that an hour spent with a telephone installer, for example, will result in: an inventory of the contents of his truck (classification), a writing assignment on the nature of his work, and, as a follow up, the construction of a working telephone system in the classroom (science project, electricity). This is enough information for a majority of parents to see an academic value

in the experience, as well as the enjoyment of the hour talking and working with this person.

The only way parents and others will know of the nature of your plans and the children's accomplishments however, is for you to find a way to tell them. You can tell them in advance through a note, perhaps accompanying a permission slip. You can involve them later directly in the project, but that will only affect a few parents. Some teachers have used after school coffee hours to talk to parents. Some employ class or school newspapers to inform. Some manage to involve a local paper in covering the children's work, but often the best way is to get the parents and the children in school together.

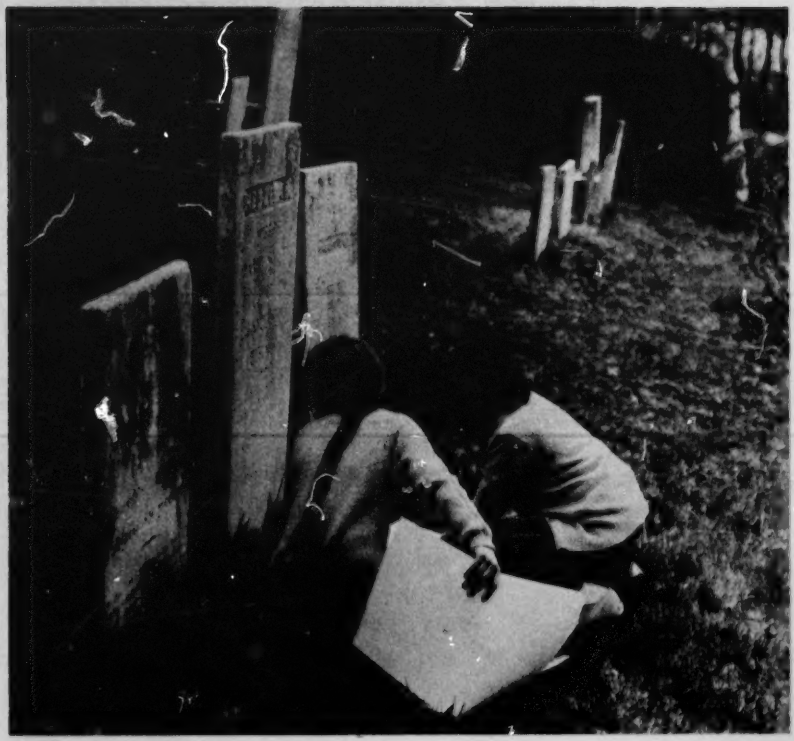
There is a magic in having the children show their work to their parents. This can be done best after school, preferably in the evening in the relaxed format of a fair or demonstration. Here, the children can easily show what they have been working on and the teacher will have a chance to talk to many parents. This sort of gathering may not be centered exclusively on Community Studies, rather it may be a science fair, a presentation concerning a breadth of social studies work, or an evening centered on children's writing and art. Such a gathering is also a fine time to ask a principal or other administrator to comment on the project, giving him or her a chance to be heard by parents on a specific topic.

In most school districts, communicating with townspeople who are not involved in the life of the school is very difficult. But in the case of Community Studies, the people you visit or invite into the school are often your best ambassadors. If they are aware of the value of their contribution, they are likely to tell friends of theirs. Also, most people whom you invite to your class or take children to meet are complimented that you have sought them out. If they feel positive about your visit, they are likely to share this feeling with others.

Throughout your plans for Community Studies work, it is important to keep in mind the criticism of some skeptics: What are they doing out of school? We pay for those kids to go to school and now they're visiting a factory (at a beaver pond, watching a construction project, etc.).

Some people will complain regardless of what you do. They may feel they have lost control of their schools in the past few years. But others simply need information. Through the local paper, through the town report, through the mouths of their grandchildren, or by talking directly with school personnel, they *must* hear of the academic value of what you are doing. Many teachers have noted that the most successful arguments center on increased motivation to accomplish work in school and on better writing and math skills. Whatever arguments you present, it is important to seize as many opportunities as possible to reach people with questions and criticisms.

A final point to remember in seeking support from many sources is that over time, your support will grow as your programs grow and improve. The doubts that may exist about your work in its first year will lessen as parents and others begin to see a value in the children's activities—often through the mouths of the children themselves.



Local history traced in a cemetery.

19

Community Studies Activities

This section contains sketches of activities designed and used by Vermont teachers. Most entries appear largely in the words of the teacher who led the work.

In each case, this is a project which *succeeded* in the eyes of the teachers and children involved. Nonetheless, to use it in another school, the project would require careful redesigning for local problems and possibilities. Each activity is presented here to spark your own thinking and planning.

Communications problems make it impossible to locate all the Community Studies work taking place in Vermont. Undoubtedly, this booklet misses some of the finest, but what you read here is the result of intensive work by many teachers and is worth consideration by the rest of us.

This section is organized into broad categories around certain subjects. Some of the activities could well fit in two or three groups. Most of these projects are useful for a wide range of ages and could be focused towards several areas of the school curriculum.

At the end of this section are a series of activities that illustrate techniques:

Interviews and Observations
Values Clarification and Role Playing
Shadowing
Tying Community Studies to the Regular Curriculum

LOCAL HISTORY

Vermont offers wonderful opportunities for local history work with children. Teachers can obtain support from town historical societies and from the Vermont Historical Society (Pavilion Building, Montpelier). Looking beyond local conditions, teachers and students may also use Vermont as a case study for early settlements, westward migration, the development of cities, and changing agricultural and economic patterns. Further ideas for local history projects appear in the "Interviews and Observations" section of this booklet.

Historic Windsor:

Julee Ann Blaisdell, State Street School, Windsor. Sixth Grade.

At this school five sixth grade students discovered that there was no written history of the town of Windsor. Using research, photography, and interview techniques, they have compiled one. The slide-tape presentation that is part of the project became part of the town's bicentennial celebration and a resource for other students in the school.

Heritage of a Vermont Town:

Ruth Mazelli, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Fourth Grade.

This class devotes a large portion of its social studies curriculum each year to local history. Children visit some of the oldest buildings in town and meet with older citizens. They focus on major events: the building of the first meeting house, moving of the town from its hilltop position to the nearby valley (economic need), and the reasons for changing the name of the town from Draper to Wilmington.

An intriguing element is the tracing of the backgrounds of the earliest citizens, many of whom came from Deerfield, Massachusetts. A study of Old Deerfield adds excitement and background to this local history project. Throughout the study, children also discuss larger issues of settlement in New England, self-sufficiency, and changing local economies.

Hancock:

Steven John, Whitingham School, Whitingham. Fourth & Fifth Grade.

This booklet was completed in 1970 when Steven John taught in

Hancock, New Hampshire, but it is such a fine example of a local history project that we include mention of it here:

The booklet relies almost exclusively on the children's photography, drawing, and research. The format is chronological at first—a list of major events in the town's history, a two page historical outline, and an article on native American Indians. The latter notes, in part, that they did not have horses because, ". . . . the horses would trip or crash into trees."

The simple style of the children's writing is refreshing and the format improves as the booklet turns to specific topics of interest to the students, for example: farms, an 1880 ghost story, an old inn, roads, rolling winter roads, school buildings, the railroad, and the first telephone service.

Each topic is dealt with in one or two pages and most are accompanied with a student's drawing or photograph. Spiral bound and printed offset with a heavy cover, the booklet is short, informative, and attractive. It serves the additional purpose of being a fine job of community relations as people not connected with the school have a chance to see it.

Mixing the Past with the Present:

Geoffrey Graham, Adams-Summer Street Schools, St. Johnsbury.

This project began with a federal "mini-grant" and it has been described as, ". . . . based on the premise that a sense of local history must surely be gained by doing many of the same things our ancestors did."

The description continues: "Students build a log cabin, and using that as the focus, plan and participate in a number of activities from the past. While these activities may be centered on the past, they include the need to learn present day skills of math and reading. Elementary students and teachers work with vocational building and industrial arts classes, masons, craftsmen and others to both research and reconstruct artifacts of the past. Students weave, build, sing, measure, create and act in plays."

Rogers Rangers Ride Again:

Henry Butler, Constance Barth, Windsor High School, Windsor. Junior High.

Begun under another "mini-grant," this project offers a variety of options for learning.

Junior high students take to the trail to relive some of the experiences of their forebearers. Although they have more modern equipment than those of earlier generations, much of it is made in industrial

arts or home economics classes. Knowledge of the natural surroundings comes through science class preparation, and the history of the area from history class. Each student must donate part of the cost earned at jobs they would *not ordinarily hold*. Each student has the responsibility for his or her group one day on the trail. Students who participate are expected to experience some behavior change and gain an appreciation for what "it really was like," as well as their natural surroundings.

Evaluation is based on student logs, attendance records during preparation, and behavior change as recorded by the teachers.

Comparing Life Styles:

Mary Lou Hagedorn and Nicki Steel, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Second Grade.

This class began a project on life styles in the nineteenth century by inviting an elderly lady in the town to visit the class. Known for her ability to tell stories in a manner exciting to children, she gave them firsthand ideas of the life she and her parents led in Wilmington around the turn of the century.

The class then visited the Park-McCullough House in North Bennington, where guides took them through historical exhibits and helped these young children to glimpse the life styles of people in this home of wealthy nineteenth century railroad magnates and industrialists.

To point out that not everyone lived that way, the class visited Hancock Shaker Village in Hancock, Massachusetts, an intriguing presentation of Shaker life, with the Shakers' communal living and working arrangements and their avoidance of "the world," as they called everyone else.

This complex activity worked with second graders because the two sites that they visited offered many action experiences where children could interact with materials and people, as opposed to a conventional, "hands-off" museum. These travels were followed by many class discussions, writing and art projects, with groups of children involved in different activities.

Nineteenth Century Towns:

Nancy E. Ellis, Rock Point, Burlington. Ungraded, 8-12 year olds.

Using photography and many local resources, this activity involved children in life of one hundred years ago. Ms. Ellis writes:

"As a 'social studies' project which would lead into a study of local economic development in Nineteenth Century in Burlington, I decided to focus on architecture, since we could really look at the ar-

chitecture from that period which still exists in Burlington. I started with some studies of house furnishings (kids liked kitchens best) and home crafts of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. We took a field trip to the Shelburne Museum and kids did reports. We had a speaker come in and show us some simple antiques and old clothing. Next, I made up three slide shows. The first one showed the various simple shelters, from umbrellas and treehouses to cinderblock gas stations and elaborate public buildings. The second show illustrated the architecture of ancient Greece (the Parthenon, etc.) and Gothic Europe, comparing it to neoclassical architecture and Victorian Gothic in Burlington. The third show was simply a collection of about 50 slides of various houses in Burlington which were interesting historically and architecturally, and about which I knew material had been written. I let each child in the class choose one house to research. The children visited their sites with volunteer helpers (parents and interested people). They interviewed the persons living in the building or working in it. They made sketches of the building, and they filled out a form from the Vermont Historical Society with as much information as they could find. They could use the local city directories and gazeteers from the 1800's, and some newer material written by persons who belong to the Vermont Historical Society. The most interesting information came from the interviews. Some children tape-recorded their interviews and transcribed portions of them. The study led many children into inquiries about the development of the shipping, railroad, and lumber industries which brought wealth to this area during the 1800's."

Visiting an Historic Village Re-creation:

Hinda Birch, Windham Northeast Supervisory Union, Bellows Falls. Elementary.

There are many fine village re-creations in or near Vermont. Shelburne is outstanding in the state. Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts is equally impressive and is accessible to many students in southern Vermont.

This Bellows Falls group went to Sturbridge for a day visit, which included many experiences set up for them by the education staff at the Village. The most impressive part of their effort, however, was the preliminary work that preceded the visit.

They set up four workshops for the children who came from several different schools. In these sessions, they got to know each other through group projects, games, and specific tasks. They viewed a film about Sturbridge, giving them a bit of familiarity ahead of time. In small groups these children also visited the local historical society, rubbed gravestones, went sugaring, and visited a potter, a quilter, and

a spinner. The children planned their own menus and did the shopping ahead of time, as well as planning out all the financial arrangements. All these preliminary activities gave them a degree of background that made their visit far more intriguing and useful.

MEDIA

This overworked word still serves to group a number of experiences that are important for many children. Our lives are influenced by television, radio and the press, but many children have little knowledge of how these things they see and hear are produced or of who does the work. Some of these activities suggest ways that we, as teachers, can remedy that.

There are also elements of media work that children can become directly involved with in or near the school. Outstanding are the production of a newspaper or magazine and the use of photography and photo processing in the school.

Exploring Jobs in Our Community:

Ellie Roden, Readsboro Central School, Readsboro. First Grade.

These young children used simple camera equipment to photograph many of the adults they already knew in the community, but they carefully sought these people out in their places of work. A display in the school included the photos and some of the children's writing describing their experiences.

Photographer's Studio:

Barbara Cole, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington.

So many children are intrigued with photography that it seems an important aspect of many Community Studies programs. As a recording tool, it is exceptional. As a way of giving a visual reminder of an experience that can then be turned into display, it is unparalleled.

In addition to having cameras available to the children here, the school has operated a darkroom for older children, and the children have made trips to the studios and darkrooms of local professional photographers. For those children who are honestly involved in photography, these trips are a great motivation as well as a special opportunity to see the kind of career that someone has made out of an activity that is interesting to the children.

Photography: A Tool for Creativity:

Janet McKinnon, Mary Hogan Elementary School, Middlebury.

This project, again begun with a mini-grant, has involved five teachers in a multifaceted approach to photography as an integral part of the curriculum. Students have used photography to explore their

physical environment, their heritage, and to learn more about their peers and their own emotions. Activities have included:

designing and producing a photography book

contrasting photos of technological products with handcrafted items

photographing buildings, people and historic structures

doing photo essays about themselves.

All the photographs are processed by children who also put on an art show, and a series of displays and exhibits of their work.

Newspapers:

From the notes of several teachers:

In many schools, teachers feel that they should expose children to some of the workings of the press and to the technology that goes into producing radio, television and newspapers.

At Fisher Elementary School in Arlington, teachers Hank VanDine and Robert Phelps led a group of sixth graders to the offices of the GUIDE in Manchester to observe the way that news is gathered and prepared for publication. They then traveled to Bennington to observe operations at the Pennysaver Press where the GUIDE is printed. They later focused on accurate and creative use of written language in the classroom and managed to do some actual press work in the class.

Mrs. Beverly Austin at the Lawton School in Essex Junction uses an extensive unit on newspapers which first requires that the sixth grade students bring in an assortment of current papers. She suggests:

1. Cut out feature stories—editorials—list facts and opinions.
2. Have students write letters to the editor of your local newspaper. (We mailed 20 letters and had 11 published.)
3. Have class write a newspaper. We are writing a newspaper on the year 2000. Have students discuss groups for the paper. (For example, news reporters, editors, feature writers, artists, advertising, etc.)
4. Have a person from your local newspaper come in to speak on how the paper is put together.
5. Utilize the New York Times curriculum aids on all phases of a newspaper. (Includes filmstrips and records.) This may be found in your library.
6. Take a trip to your local newspaper. Students see how the paper is put together and observe all the people working at the various careers associated with the paper.

At Monument Elementary in Bennington, teachers Patricia Skolout and Robert Marcoux developed an elaborate newspaper and photography project beginning with an SRA NewsLab Kit and ending with a student-run paper that incorporated the work of a photography team.

The project had by-products such as visits to the local paper and a team of parents who taught touch typing to students who were preparing to type the paper itself.

Radio and Television:

In Vermont, only Burlington has extensive television studios that can become the focus of study, but a number of schools have enough video tape equipment to allow children the chance to tape themselves and to see themselves on the monitor. Often teams of high school students are willing to work with younger children to produce a "TV show" for use in the school.

In terms of Community Studies, however, radio is a more interesting field to explore in Vermont. There are many AM or FM stations in the state and most will gladly give tours. Some are interested in airing shows produced in schools. If there is a station near you that is received well in your town, it is worth a visit. See if the station would allow a student to be interviewed, or even to air a student program. Some stations will allow a student to help read the news or weather. In the next few years, watch the development of Vermont Public Radio for ways in which your students might become involved.

Using Films and Filmstrips in Community Studies Programs:

The fact that Community Studies focuses on local people and places does not exclude the use of commercial films and filmstrips to augment a project or to motivate discussion and comparison with other areas. Also, in almost any town one can find citizens who have taken pictures or even films of the local area over a period of years, or perhaps someone with a special interest—a naturalist, a businessman, a builder, who have recorded their work on film.

A good source of free photos is the Vermont Historical Society in Montpelier. They have some fine file pictures, as well as a series of slide-text presentations specifically for loan to schools. (Write Vermont Historical Society, Pavilion Building, Montpelier)

The Vermont Department of Education owns a set of the films, "Bread and Butterflies," a television series that explores children's homes and community life. This series has a number of possibilities for use in discussions that center on local issues or conditions. (Write Walter Faulkner, Department of Education)

Commercial films that deal with life styles in many parts of the world are useful to promote discussions. A fine collection of such films is available free from the Norman Wilson Memorial Film Collection in Brattleboro. (Write Howard Shapiro, School for International Training, Kipling Road, Brattleboro, for a listing.)

NATURAL SCIENCE

It is important to remember that at many Vermont schools, the environment very close to the school is a fine example of the general environment of the town. The vegetation will be similar around much of the town. The soil conditions will be generally similar. Certainly, the climate will be the same overall. Natural science projects that take place close to the school will give the students facts and ideas that will probably apply directly to the areas around their own homes as well. Natural science projects can also lead children to many fine resource people in the area who work in this field as a hobby or a vocation.

Life in a Vacant Lot:

Sandal W. Cate, Union Elementary, Montpelier. Fourth Grade.

This activity was designed to help students discover the world of plants and animals inhabiting a vacant lot. The lot belongs to the city of Montpelier and may become a usable park, but at this time the plant and animal life typifies that found on many city lots. Students use magnifying lenses and collecting bags to help examine the plants and for making a collection of seeds, galls, insect cases, etc.

Preparation for this work involves viewing a filmstrip from the series *Living Things in the City* and our follow-up centers on creating a display of mounted and collected items on construction paper.

The Apple Harvest:

Barbara Cole, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Kindergarten, First & Second Grades.

Apple picking season is a fine time of year to take children out of doors and the orchards offer many opportunities for study. In addition to examining the trees and the fruits, many orchards offer a variety of other natural science possibilities. There may be a pond available for pond life studies. The grasses planted throughout the orchard hide a variety of small creatures to be discovered easily by children. "Drops" on the ground may harbor slugs, worms, or other insects which can be easily observed.

Apples offer many possibilities for cooking and for cider making, perhaps right at the school. Apple dolls are exciting to make and an older member of the community may be able to come in to the school to share this skill. In addition, any contact with an orchard can make children aware of issues in agriculture, seasonal labor, pesticides, and orchard management.

Watching and Feeding Birds:

From the notes of a number of teachers:

Much of Vermont is on migration flyways that bring a variety of birds to us in various seasons. From thousands of Canada geese in the Lake Champlain area in early spring to mountaintop hawk watches, there are fine opportunities to introduce children to bird life.

Feeders that are fun to build can be a fine addition to the space outside a classroom window. Testing different kinds of food on a wintering bird population (with some careful guidance) is a valid science project and there are endless possibilities for identification, observation, and art and research work for the interested child.

A fine resource in this area and for most natural science projects is the staff at the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, Woodstock, Vermont. In many towns, teachers have been able to find local people interested in both birds and children's learning to help as well.

Tracking: (Especially in Winter)

Joan Bechtold, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Fifth Grade.

Often in the winter, this class ventured out of doors to track animals on a wooded lot in back of the school. Much of this work was done on snowshoes. Through the seasons, they tracked deer, fox, porcupine, rabbit, squirrel, dogs, and several birds. The groups tried to identify food sources for these animals. They also tried to locate, but not disturb, their winter quarters. Tracking on snowshoes also presents problems for children about their own ability to get around in the winter. The teams of students practiced trailbreaking, following trails, and finding their way in dense woods without a compass.

The experiences this group had in the field led the teacher to arrange a visit by a local naturalist who has specialized in winter photographs of animals in their winter habitats.

The Beaver Pond:

David Green, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Fourth-Fifth Grades.

Watersheds are subject to alterations by man and also by some other animals. The most active of these is the beaver and, over a period of years, we have seen children become very interested in the study of beavers. There are several good films and books available on them.

Beaver ponds are exciting partly bacause they are in a constant and observable state of change. Two or three visits to the same pond will provide some striking changes in the trees that have been dropped. The dam may change as well. If the pond has been abandoned it is also

changing, as the water level drops and the grasses appear on the muddy bottom. In an old pond, it may be possible to get very close to the lodge and to find the underwater entrance. Beaver ponds are fine sites to practice silent observation since it is possible to see a beaver if the group can maintain a position and be silent for long enough.

The Local Watershed:

Joan Bechtold, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Fifth Grade

Regardless of the location of your school, it is in a watershed. The area may be drained by a small stream or a large river. Regardless of the size of the immediate drainage area, you have ready access to a research and discussion topic about the water cycle, the flow of water into and in streams, and the growth of a large river system. A tiny brook near the school can serve as an example in microcosm of the largest river system.

Other topics involve: The effect of run-off and drainage on farming, roads, businesses, and water supplies. If flood plain zoning is an issue in your town, this is a fine way to begin to talk about flood plains.

There are fine opportunities for map making, building a model of a watershed, or illustrating various principles of geography. This can be done outdoors in sand or indoors in a variety of modeling materials.

Resource people include: town road commissioner, local or regional planners, surveyors.

This is the kind of unit that fits very well with many text book chapters on rivers or watersheds. One can begin very simply by observing a local stream and then discussing, in class, where it leads to—perhaps following it on a map.

A note on maps: Many maps are available free in Vermont. Check with: regional planning agencies, town or city offices, local book or hardware stores (for possible donation of U.S. Geodetic Survey maps), Vermont Development Office, Montpelier.

Classification Games with Natural Objects:

Helene Mello with Barbara Cole, Wilmington. Kindergarten.

In so many books for teachers classification is pointed out as a crucial skill to emphasize with young children. Many published kits focus on classification games, or sorting, with materials that are provided in the kit or that can be found in the classroom. While any such activity is valuable, we have had special success with classification games made by the children, usually from collections they have acquired on a field trip. This trip can be no more than a short walk outdoors.

Even if the children pick up only pebbles near a parking lot, they

will have some fine materials for a classification game that is entirely of their own making. They can sort the materials and discuss their reasons for putting certain things together.

Games such as this, using "found" materials, also introduce an important note of debate into the games. There are more elements to discuss and to classify in a collection of twigs, leaves, or metal than in a commercial kit of materials. Some items will fit in no clear group. Our lives are seldom full of problems that can be solved perfectly with no loose ends and classification games are a fine way to introduce young children to such difficulties. There may be many solutions and, in the end, you and I may not agree.

Observing a Small Plot:

Kathryn Larsen, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Third Grade.

Often we fail to take the time to examine something in detail or over a long period. What follows is a description of a small plot of land, carefully studied by one class over three seasons:

We began in the autumn to investigate the woods behind our school. There was so much to observe that we decided to mark off one section which was fairly typical of the whole area. We found an area with some natural boundaries and some man-made ones. One side was an old stone wall; the other sides were not so delineated. In the children's words: "We measured how big our plot was going to be (approximately 50 feet square). We found a pole for one corner. We found the sugar house for one corner. We found three pine trees in a row for one corner." The fourth corner was a dead, hollow tree with a number of woodpecker holes in it.

To record our observations and activities dealing with the plot, two of the children made a large book for the class. We called this *Our Plot Book* and all the children were listed as authors. In the book we recorded the following activities and included the children's drawings and writings that resulted:

1. We discussed the meaning of the word "plot" and decided which definition fit our needs.
2. Our first large group observation was done in this manner: Each child was asked to find his own space in the plot and notice everything he could about this one area. The children were encouraged to use all of their senses except for taste. Each child sat silently in his own space for a few minutes and then we came together and made one large list of everything people had noticed. Instead of writing down each item every time it was mentioned, a tally was kept, for example: 11 people saw ferns, 7 saw pine trees, and 3 saw an airplane fly overhead.

3. We did several different creative writing assignments motivated by the plot study. Some of these included pure fantasy stories, writing about the lives of plants or animals in the plot, describing the feelings you felt or sounds you heard while you were in the plot, and also poems about things in the plot. Almost all of this work was accompanied by illustrations.

Pond life project.

4. We did many small group hikes to the plot with specific purposes such as tree, bird and plant identification and also additional general observations. One group made this tally of what they saw: "71 saplings, 12 separate blackberry patches, 3 old, dead, standing trees, and 23 large maples."
5. One time the whole class went up to the plot armed with clipboards, pencils, and drawing paper. The assignment was to find a tree and draw it as accurately as possible. (The children became aware from this activity that every tree does not look like a lollipop or a Christmas tree.) Each child found out what kind of tree he drew and then watched "his tree" change throughout the seasons.
6. We discussed how to give directions to get to our plot and did some simple mapping. Two boys explained their procedure this way: "We saw some slides first. With the slides we saw how to go somewhere else. Then we got a trundle wheel and started to go (to our plot). We made a map on the way. It took an hour. We measured 392 meters." Another very detailed map was done by two girls on a long, narrow piece of paper. It showed hills, rocks, and corners as it followed the path to the plot.

7. Small groups visited the plot at different times in the winter on snowshoes. Some of the winter activities included finding and identifying animal tracks in the snow, taking the temperature of the snow and air in different areas, and measuring the depth of the snow in different areas.
8. In the spring we identified and drew wild flowers and noticed their succession as the weather became warmer.
9. Throughout the year, weather information and seasonal changes were observed and recorded.

This was an excellent project for my class. It was a long range study which provided experiences in a number of different skills and had an obvious continuity for the children. Although interest did decline somewhat in the spring, we had followed the plot through three of the four seasons of the year. Also, many of the children play in these woods or similar areas all the time and therefore this was a very relevant study for them.

FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AND FORESTRY

Many students know little about where their food comes from or what happens to it before it reaches them, but most children enjoy an exploration of growing things and food preparation.

In Vermont, a study of what comes from the land would not be complete without a look at forestry. We see the big logging trucks hauling their loads and some of us may know where the nearest sawmill is, but few understand the cyclical life patterns of a forest or how loggers are farming the woods to provide materials that surround us every day.

Gardens and Trees:

Samuel Demas, Orange Center School, Orange. Elementary.

Mr. Demas tries to bridge the time between the closing weeks of the school year and the long summer vacation by having children begin work at school that will be carried on through the summer. He writes, "Students start the seed for a 10'×12' home garden in school. They take part in an Arbor Day ceremony, with parents and others from the community, by planting shade and fruit trees and flowering shrubs. In one of the two towns in this project, the trees are planted in an area which will be used for community recreation. Through these activities students learn how to grow plants and trees, some basic soil science, plant identification and about food sources. Children will, as they go through school, have the satisfaction of seeing the small trees they plant mature."

Greenhouse at a School:

David Green, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington.

A mini-grant several years ago started this project, with the building of a greenhouse against a southeast wall of the school. Local builders helped with laying the cement block for the foundation. Students observed and asked questions. A carpenter in town had experience assembling the greenhouse unit itself and helped when that time arrived. Students leveled the floor, built shelves and other equipment inside, and planned the uses of the greenhouse.

When the structure was complete, a market gardener from the area came to the school to talk about uses he might put such a greenhouse to and the students incorporated some of his ideas into the plans for use. This elaborate greenhouse complements the site, but fine work

could also be done with cold frames or other structures. Parents are generally very willing to bring in cuttings or large plants to keep the project going and to assist with the operation of the greenhouse. Once the structure is in place, there are endless opportunities for involvement with it, by children and others in the community.

Conservation Day:

Mrs. Ruth Simpson, Arlington Street School, St. Johnsbury. Fourth-Sixth Grades.

Children at this school have gone through a very elaborate visiting program at a nearby farm where, in one day, they are exposed to a large number of resource people. In addition to the farm visit itself they talk to: a Fish and Game Biologist, the County Forester, an official from the Department of Water Resources, a Soil Conservation Service expert, the Agricultural Extension Agent and several others.

Working in small teams, the children have time to talk to each of these people. The organization of a day like this is difficult, but in some cases it is easier to get a group of resource people together this way than one by one.

Farm Life, Construction, and Nature:

Mrs. Mary DeLong, Whitney School, Bennington. Kindergarten-Fourth Grade.

Mrs. DeLong, the principal, has set up an intriguing and accurate contrast in one visit to a farm near Bennington. The children had a chance to look at the farm animals and to learn a bit about them, as well as to go on a nature hike on the property. They also took time to look at one of the endless construction projects that are required on most farms, in this case, a silo. In the course of the visit, children saw agriculture in progress, the farm life that it supports, and the need for food storage on a farm: the silo with its corn for the cattle.

A Farm Environment Checklist:

Doug Sherry, Montpelier Environmental Education Project.

This project, which has produced some fine environmental and community studies materials, offers us an interesting idea in the checklist. It is a reference point and a good way to be sure that you think of as many options as possible when going outside the school. Such a checklist could be drafted for many areas that a class might care to study. Here is the M.E.E.P. list for farms:

Farm Environment: Animals, Production, Storage, Feeding, Housing, Planting Crops, Harvesting, Machinery and Equipment, Economics, Conservation practices.

Life on the Farm: Life-styles, Hours of Work, Self-sufficiency, Use of Space (house, farm buildings, land), Seasonal Activities, Recreation and Entertainment.
Possible Field Trips: A processing plant (bottler), a creamery, a distribution center, a cheese processing center.
Follow-ups: making butter or cheese.

Food and Cooking:

Barbara Cole, Betsy Ziegler, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington.

Some good health education can be mixed with excitement through cooking in school, particularly if it follows upon a project in the community. A visit to a local hospital led to collection of hospital menus and discussions about a balanced diet. We took inventories of kids' favorite foods and tried to build them into a balanced diet. That is not easy, in many cases! Menus were collected from several restaurants as well. In one second grade class where a model store had been built, we priced the ingredients for some of our menus, leading to practical math activities.

Cooking is also an activity that can carry over to the home and can involve many local people who bring their talents to the school. In one case, we invited in a man who specializes in Chinese cooking and he prepared an entire meal in a third grade classroom, with the help of the children. Whole grain cooking is also worthwhile because it is easier to trace the source of the food. For instance, in making bread, one can start with the wheat berries, grind the flour in school and make the bread, involving many children and many branches of the curriculum as well.

Preparation of a school garden.

Forestry:

From the notes of several teachers.

Nearly 80 percent of Vermont is forested and many things can be learned through visits to these woods which are often near the school. There are ideas for this in the Natural Science section of this booklet, but some should be considered here also.

A forestry activity that often takes place on a farm is sugaring. This early spring activity seems to be of annual interest to many children, particularly if they can participate in it. Many schools can tap a few of their own maples, or get access to some nearby. One teacher coupled a small scale sugaring operation with a cooking lesson, producing a carefully planned and well-balanced breakfast for an entire class. Of course, there were pancakes, topped with the children's own maple syrup.

Logging iteslf can be an intriguing subject of study with observations, interviews, and charts depicting the trip of one tree from the forest to the sawmill, and then perhaps following the boards on to a buyer. This kind of project has the special advantage of involving some children who are excited by heavy equipment and manufacturing. A trip to a sawmill is a worthwhile visit for many kids.

MAPPING THE COMMUNITY

There are many fine ways of using maps in the school day. Mapping includes many mathematical problems as well as drafting skills. Important discussion and problem solving techniques are involved when a number of people make maps or follow maps together. As the teachers note below, map making can begin with very young children, increasing in complexity as they become more familiar with it.

Discovering Our Environment:

Frances Mitchell, Currier Memorial School, Danby. Fifth Grade.

In this project students learn to follow a map and to map a given area, get practical use of math skills and gain an insight into the workings of the forest. The children, who are fifth graders, spend class periods in the woods with a forester, develop surveying techniques with him, use a compass, measure and scale, and construct a map. They also learn to make a transit and clinometer.

Evaluation is based on the students' ability to produce and follow accurate maps and student logs.

Of interest is the degree of technical expertise involved in the student activities.

The Smokey House Project:

Philip Lidstone, Currier Memorial School, Danby. Eighth Grade.

Metrics and ecology are the combined subjects of this experiential learning situation for eighth grade students. Working with a forester and a teacher in a local natural area, students plot hectares of land, compute a tree's diameter and height and measure the length of deer teeth in metrics. They also determine the age of trees, conduct soil tests, use compasses, learn about aerial photography and surveys and discuss land use policy. Complimentary lessons in metrics are held in the classroom. From the experiences students gain a knowledge of the metric system at work plus a real feel for a natural environment.

Students kept logs and receive a math grade for their understanding of the metric system.

Mapping Readsboro's Natural Areas:

Elsie Hasskarl, Readsboro Central School, Readsboro. Sixth–Eighth Grades.

Students discover, describe and map the interesting natural areas of their community so all can use them. As a result of their activities, there is a booklet of maps and trail descriptions and a slide-tape show telling about natural areas. To do this students find natural areas using aerial photographs and topographical maps, mark trails, site landmarks, photograph and describe each area. Students learn measuring and mapping skills and increase their awareness of the natural world around them. The project is evaluated by a pre and post test of student learning.

Mini-grant funds provided film, mapping supplies, thermometers, soil kits, stream study nets and many other environmental supplies, as well as a slide projector, screen and many resource books.

As follow-up, mapped areas will be used to study forestry, water and wildlife.

Map Skills in the Primary Grades:

Renee DuPont and Joan Watson, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. First–Second Grades.

For many teachers of young children, the difficulty of working with maps is finding exciting ways to introduce them. Here, two teachers describe activities that worked for them:

One often observes children playing with trucks and cars just outside their homes. If we look closely at the play, we almost always see an intricate series of roads, bridges, and buildings. Play of this kind is often seen in the sandbox in our kindergarten room or on a natural sand hill on the school grounds where an elaborate system of streams, dams, tunnels, and roads is created by four through ten year olds as soon as the winter snows melt.

We used these observations about childrens' play as a basis for teaching introductory map skills to our first and second graders. Most of the activities took place during our environmental education period once a week.

During the first session we showed the children a large topographic map of the town of Wilmington. No extensive explanations were given at this time, but rather a few main roads and buildings were pointed out to the children. We then posted the map on a bulletin board. The children were very curious about where their own homes were. We asked them to draw pictures of their houses. We helped them make their pictures unique by discussing things like color, shape, number of windows and doors of each one's house while they were drawing. As each child finished, he put his picture on the bulletin board and then was helped to put a string from his picture to the location on the map.

Later in the week we had the children draw pictures of their

neighborhoods. They again drew their houses, but this time added other houses, buildings, landscaping, or roads. We found that they added places of significance to them and left out others. Some children had difficulty and needed help in placing buildings in the correct location.

The next few sessions were centered around painting a four by eight foot plywood board. Small groups of children along with a teacher drew on the main roads and the roads on which the children lived. The children painted the roads black and the other areas of the map green. A local mountain, made of paper mache, was put on. Each child chose a miniature wooden building to represent his house. With help, each child glued his home to the map. One boy, finding it very difficult to explain the location of his house, was taken by car to his house while being shown certain landmarks. After putting on their own homes, the children added buildings of importance to them. They put on the local bank, the post office, the school and the Grand Union.

When the map was completed, (the children eventually added trees and signs) it was mounted on cinder blocks on the floor low enough for the children to reach. Toy automobiles were put out and the children gathered around and played. We made activity cards to direct some of the play. For example: Name the buildings you would pass on the way from Michael's house to Karl's house.

Through these activities, the children improved their observation skills, gained a better insight to their own environment, and a knowledge of their community. It developed in them an expertise that made their play situations more realistic. It also proved to be a beneficial social situation for the children. Some were very surprised to see how close certain classmates lived to them and the play around the board map always made for lively discussions.

We feel that these activities are easily adaptable to other classrooms and other age groups.

Working on a topographical map of a township.

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TECHNOLOGY

Technology brings progress and a number of problems as well. We are sending children on towards an even more highly technological age than what most of us are familiar with, yet there are ways we can expose them to technology through resources close to many of us in Vermont.

Computers:

Mrs. Rosina Greenwood, St. Johnsbury Junior High School, St. Johnsbury. Eighth Grade.

Mrs. Greenwood's eighth grade language arts group visited the St. Johnsbury Trucking Company's computer building as a follow-up to classroom science fiction reading on "computer people" and computers in general. The reading quite naturally led to an interest in and discussions on present day use of computers. The group of 17 students toured the building, seeing the equipment, its operation, and the duties of the various workers. Students operated a key punch and punched out computer cards.

Following are some of the remarks made by students concerning their experience:

" . . . I especially liked the computers that typed all those names in three seconds. It would take a worker about a week or more to type it by hand! . . . I'm not saying that computers are all good . . . It's bad too because it's putting many people out of work. . . ."

" . . . the computers are very complicated pieces of machinery to understand and to operate, but they are very fast at what they do, and time is their main concern down there . . . if they had to do the work by hand, it would put them right out of business."

" . . . very interesting, but I did not like some of it. For example, when we went into that room, we could not hear him (Mr. Bolch) talk (noise from computers)."

Transportation:

Mary Lou Hagedorn, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Second Grade.

A conventional social studies unit often needs a boost from some exciting experience to make it more memorable for children. Mrs. Hagedorn writes, "The most memorable follow-up of all was a trip to Bradley International Airport to have the children explore the interior

and exterior of a TWA jet. We were taken on the tour by the co-pilot and each child was allowed to sit in the pilot's seat as well as in the passenger compartment. We went from there to a tour of the control tower and then to an airline food preparation center."

Aircraft fascinate many children and, although it is hard to get on board a large commercial jet, it is often possible to learn a great deal at a small airport, of which there are several in Vermont.

Handtools:

Chuck Tarinelli, Whitingham School, Whitingham. Sixth Grade.

Although technology is always changing, many tools retain their usefulness over years of service. This project concerned itself with the use and care of woodworking tools and with the kinds of construction that can be done with them. A local builder was invited to the school to discuss the use of some tools and then the students selected projects using tools available in the school. While working on the projects, students visited local building sites to observe large scale construction.

"Origins of Things":

Doug Sherry, Montpelier Environmental Education Project. Third Grade.

This activity was centered around the question of what shoes are made of an how they are made. A filmstrip on shoemaking and leather processing was followed by a visit to a shoe store and a shoe repair shop. At the second stop, the children were shown what the inside of shoes look like, how soles and heels are repaired, and how the equipment worked. Doug Sherry notes, "This also provided us with a chance to discuss these people's jobs and why they enjoy them."

Electricity:

Barbara Cole and Casey Murrow, Wilmington. Activities used from Kindergarten to Sixth grade.

In many science programs, batteries and bulbs are used to help children to work actively with electricity and to build circuits and functioning systems of their own. We can introduce them to a variety of problems to be solved with wire, batteries, switches, and bulbs. These can be of varying complexity depending on the age of the child and there are many fine examples in E.S.S. guides and elsewhere.

An extension of this calls for finding an experienced electrician in your area who will come to the school and work with kids or who will allow children to watch him work on a job. The best jobs are in new construction, where the wires can be traced and it is possible for children to imagine what is behind the walls of their own houses.

Another aspect of the study of electricity is the generating plant. Somewhere near you is an oil, coal, or hydro-electric generator. These plants are noisy and exciting. They usually welcome school tours. From the plant, you may trace the wires back to your school. You can draw upon service personnel, linemen and others, to describe their work and to talk about how the electricity gets to the school.

Studying electricity in schools, we often neglect the resources that are available to us nearby. Yet these resources are the very things that make the study more realistic to children and make them aware that what they study in school (with the batteries and bulbs) relates directly to a service that is vital to our society.

Home Construction:

Helene Mello, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Kindergarten.

There are many fine builders in Vermont and seeing their work exposes children to the adult version of the hammering and nailing that young children so enjoy.

The parents of a child in my class were building a house near the school in the fall of 1975. We visited the site weekly for six weeks, watching it grow from the concrete foundation to an enclosed, partitioned building. The trips were very short, often no more than 25 minutes from start to finish, yet the children had time to talk, see, and touch materials on the site. We followed this up with charts, art work, and discussions after almost every visit.

A student in the quality control lab of a precision metal crafting plant.

GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Government has increasing impact on our lives and it is becoming more important for children to grasp what our governmental bodies are and how we can have an impact on them. A class in St. Johnsbury studies the court system and spends a portion of a day in a courtroom, listening to the work of lawyers, jurors, and the judge. In many towns, classes focus on Town Meeting when that date arrives annually. Some classes engage in local history by comparing the work of the town meeting two hundred years ago with its efforts (and budgets) now.

In Burlington, one teacher led her upper elementary class through a project that directly influenced the actions of local government:

The Sidewalk:

Nancy E. Ellis, Rock Point, Burlington.

We studied the structure of city government. We talked about ways a citizen or group of citizens can act to make needed changes in a community. Then we decided to choose an issue and try to change something locally. There was a rough stretch of sidewalk in the neighborhood where the school was. The sidewalk had no curb and there was a cliff above it which had eroded. It is the only sidewalk access to the high school. The children wrote letters to the mayor, the Street Department, the Police Department, the Park Department, and the aldermen in the district. They divided into groups and hand-delivered the letters. In the process, each group was graciously received and had a tour of the department they visited.

The children had measured the sidewalk in feet and inches, meters and centimeters, and we had taken pictures of it. Both of the newspapers published letters. The matter was discussed heatedly at an alderman's meeting and the mayor gave orders to the street department to clean the sidewalk and remove some of the cliff over the sidewalk. For about a week there was an extensive earth-moving project complete with earthmoving machinery at the site. The children visited the site and talked with the workmen. They wrote letters of appreciation to all the city departments, aldermen, and newspapers. I think they were proud of their influence. They thought of the sidewalk and spoke of it as "our sidewalk." In the process the children saw and interviewed many adults at work and they had a chance to reflect on the jobs they were doing.

Montpelier's Water History:

Doug Sherry, Montpelier Environmental Education Project.

This unit offers another approach to government services. It gives teachers a short history of the municipal water system and then proposes:

Objectives: Find the source of Montpelier's water
Follow Montpelier's water from its source to its end
Discover some of the problems associated with our water, its supply and its treatment

Activity: Trip to Berlin Pond
Stops at various points along the water mains
Conclude at Water Pollution Control Facility

Suggested Approaches:

1. Where does our water come from?
2. What do we do with water?
3. Where does it go after we use it?
4. How do you *feel* about the water you use?
5. Why does it sometimes change color?

Units for study include: the water cycle, local geology, water conservation, government decision making, and practical experiments that can be carried out by children.

Talking with fish and game biologists on the Connecticut River.

STUDENT BUSINESSES IN THE SCHOOL

Many teachers have found that setting up a functional or model business in the classroom is a valuable learning activity for children, encompassing math, writing, and critical decision making. A school business can also lead to a greater interest in businesses in the community.

The Summer Street Sixth Grade Store:

Duane Gorham, Summer Street School, St. Johnsbury.

The store sells basic school supplies and some snacks. It is a small scale model of any business operation complete with student owned and teacher owned stock. Operating costs, margins, and profits are calculated by students. They are also responsible for all advertising and sales transactions. Necessary inventory is determined and purchased by students. Money is placed in a special bank account and dividends are paid.

"The Grand Union":

Mary Lou Hagedorn, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Second Grade.

This store was a play environment for young children. They went through all the operations of a large supermarket, visiting a local store to learn how it was run and how they handled stock. An old, but accurate, cash register was loaned to the class, leading to endless addition problems. The "supplies" were empty boxes, carefully rewrapped or sealed and brought from the children's homes. A vote for a store name led to the choice of "The Grand Union" which so pleased the company involved that they gave the school an encyclopedia set—a substantial reward for these second grade store keepers.

The Pencil House:

David Green, Deerfield Valley Elementary, Wilmington. Fourth and Fifth Grades.

This successful business has operated for over three years, selling school supplies and a varied menu of mid-morning snacks to children throughout the school. Children have been involved in all aspects of the project, from building an exciting "store-front" with a local carpenter, to ordering, stocking, and selling items from the store. The accounts have been kept by students throughout the operation of the

store, making for the best of practical math problems.

Students involved in the store have a far greater understanding of the business community around them and they have engaged in a number of projects resulting from the Pencil House effort.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

In many towns, students have become involved in community service projects through their schools. Such work is often carried on by senior high school groups, but this is not always the case. Here are two different but intriguing examples:

Community Service Program:

Eugenie Doyle, Montpelier Environmental Education Program, Union Elementary, Montpelier. Sixth grade.

A group of sixth graders have formed a "Grandparents Club" in local nursing homes where they spend one afternoon a week visiting with residents, reading to them, doing errands, playing games, and other activities. Some of the "Grandparents" teach the children things, from games, to crafts, to French lessons. Students are supervised by the occupational therapist who takes time out to answer endless questions about the experience. Students keep a personal journal about their work.

The program goes on all year and is augmented by speakers who come to the school to talk about problems of the elderly and by visits to elderly people who are not in nursing homes, but are still active as farmers, crafts people, or otherwise.

Man and His Environment:

Mrs. Susan Proprecht, Sheldon School, Sheldon. Fourth grade.

Mrs. Proprecht's students examined energy conservation and pollution in the community with an eye to understanding the recycling and reclamation of waste. Rather than start a major recycling effort without having the children understand the outcome of their work, Mrs. Proprecht guided them through a recycling project of their own, turning used newsprint into fresh paper with hand operated tools right in the school. Discussions that followed dealt with recycling glass and metals, as well as with the Vermont returnable bottle law.

The students noted that there were endless community projects that they might become involved with: school clean-up, community green-up projects, or planting trees.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

In many schools, physical education instruction is moving towards "life sports" involving students in activities that they can pursue for much of the rest of their lives. Examples are programs that center on bike riding, skiing (often cross-country), hiking, tennis, and swimming. Several schools involved in this aspect of physical education have added community studies elements such as this:

Biking-Map skills, orienteering, or travel logs could form the basis for later oral reports on a bike ride. If it were planned to include this in advance, the trip might include interviews with local citizens, or a variety of photography projects.

Cross country skiing is a fine means of reaching many natural sites in Vermont in the winter. It can be a means of tracking animals or pursuing a study of budding in the late winter. Skiing allows students to reach areas that may be part of a local land use debate: a site for a new development, an area to be dammed or a wildlife habitat.

Hiking offers many of the possibilities mentioned above for biking or for cross country skiing, but it may also include longer trips, with camping involved. Perhaps the best way to learn about a natural or man-made community is to walk through it. To mix a hike with a few stops for study can be a great pleasure to many students.

As physical education looks toward long term sports, it may help to bring children more in touch with their own bodies and health needs. Other teachers, using community resources, can also contribute to students' knowledge of health and health services.

Human Physiology:

Valerie Hall, Bellows Falls Middle School, and Hinda Birch, Windham Northeast Supervisory Union, Bellows Falls.

This seventh grade science class used the local community and its services for much of its human physiology unit. Working in small groups, the two teachers led children on visits to the local hospital where groups concentrated on departments of the hospital. One explored x-ray services, another, the physical therapy department. All field work was followed by discussions in class, often centering on self-awareness. The response was so good that the teachers designed a unit based on physical handicaps with the objective of sensitizing students to people with handicaps. A further aim was to have these seventh graders focus on others beside themselves.

The unit included talks by a psychologist, readings, role playing by

using wheelchairs, blindfolds, and earplugs, as well as lengthy discussions in class. The final activity was to have students do a survey of handicapped people in Bellows Falls including interviews of many of the handicapped dealing with their life styles.

SHADOWING PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Having the opportunity to spend part of a day with an adult whom they like or whose work interests them is a special opportunity for many students. We can get a flavor for such work from these excerpts taken from the St. Johnsbury School District Newsletter, "Kids and Kareers":

"Shadow Days are becoming increasingly popular with junior high students. As an independent study, students are researching careers about which they are interested in learning. . . . Upon completion of these (research) studies, shadow days are arranged with people actually working in the professions researched. In most cases a student will spend an entire working day with a cooperating employee."

The article goes on to detail the shadowing experiences of two students interested in nursing, as well as others concerned with the legal profession, acting, and modeling.

Various forms of shadowing have been used by teachers and students. In some high schools, massive one day placement projects have allowed many students to spend a day with people in the community whose work attracts the student. Brattleboro Union High School offers a fine example of this type of program. Elsewhere, shadowing has been used almost as a game, with some very special academic purposes. Here is one idea along that line:

Listening for and Writing Conversation by Shadowing:

Esther Lindsey, Springfield Middle School, Springfield. Sixth Grade.

This activity, which bridges the gap between shadowing and observation, calls for visiting an elementary school during recess for the purpose of overhearing playground sounds and activities. Mrs. Lindsey comments, "Children should sit around the perimeter of the area with pencil and notebook ready to record actions, conversations, and events. On returning to their own school they should be able to write dialogues from what they have heard or seen. They can share the results in small groups and can also tape their imagined or overheard conversations for playback to others in the class."

Such an activity is an easy beginning to more complex shadowing, interviewing and observing. Starting with shadowing young children in a school setting makes the task easier for the students, as well as simple to arrange.

INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

Interviews and observations give us access to the lives of other people. Often, the children we teach already have ideas of people in the community whom they would enjoy talking to in an organized way. Interview techniques are valuable tools to have because they help children and adults to gain information that may be interesting and important to them. Interviews also open doors to many sorts of experiences. They are best begun simply, perhaps by asking questions of people who work in the school.

The next level of interview that is helpful to many children is with their parents, although this may prove difficult for some students. Parent interviews allow the student to ask questions on familiar ground where he or she will know some of the answers. Teachers in St. Johnsbury who have done a great deal of interview work advocate first using parents, then teachers, then going out into the larger community. However you approach it, clearly the security and safety of interviewing well known people is important to the child.

It is essential that there be a purpose for an interview. Often a school project may lead to the opportunity to go out into the community to interview someone. A quilt making project undertaken by three third grade girls in Wilmington, Vermont, brought them into contact with some women in a neighboring town for whom this work was a special skill. As the girls finished their project, an art teacher took them to watch the older women "tie off" a large quilt. The teacher commented, "There was a wonderful relationship between the generations. The three girls were deeply interested in the time and care spent on the quilt."

In Montpelier a group of elementary students had painted trash cans attractively, making them more noticeable on the city streets. Along with a teacher, they planned a series of interviews of passersby in order to find out how people reacted to the cans. Here again, they were interviewing with a very special purpose in mind. To prepare for the interviews they practiced on each other and drafted a series of questions. They also invited a newspaper reporter to the class to discuss ways in which he interviewed people.

In Arlington, Vermont, a group of second grade children used interviews in their study of "Community Workers." Since asking a lot of questions was difficult for them, they coupled their interviews with simple photography, giving them a fine collection of material for use in the classroom on their return.

Older children can manage difficult interviews and shadowing, assignments which can lead to overviews of a whole community. In Wilmington, a class of sixth graders completed a series of twenty-one interviews of business people in the village area in the course of one day. Many of the interviews were taped, particularly if the student had difficulty writing quickly. The reports and written work that came from the experiences of the day gave the class an overview of the town and its workings that they could have gotten in no other way. In terms of time devoted to the project, the students spent far less time on this effort than they would have in listening, as a group, to three or four townspeople who might have been invited to the school to discuss the same things that the interviews covered.

Junior high school students may wish to explore the local community in greater depth than the sixth graders described above. A group in Rutland, under the direction of teacher Diana Fellows, focused on careers in the area using techniques similar to the Wilmington students. Many interviews were carried out, with the jobs the people held being the most important element of the project. Files of interviews that had been completed formed the basis for a "Library of Experiences" in the classroom.

Interviews and observations of all sorts of individuals in the local community can lead to more relevant and exciting school work. They can also do much to enhance school-community relations because the person being interviewed is usually left with a feeling that his or her worth has been appreciated by teachers and children.

AUGMENTING THE REGULAR CURRICULUM

Throughout this booklet, individual projects have pointed out the links between their community orientation and the conventional curriculum of the school. However, this crucial issue merits some special attention here.

Most Community Studies projects begin in the minds of classroom teachers. Seldom do students suggest them because they have not been encouraged to do so through their school careers. Teachers almost inevitably think of projects that will bolster something that they are trying to accomplish in their classes, so that, in many cases, the connection with the regular curriculum is made at the outset. Nonetheless, it might be valuable to look at the reasoning behind these connections in the minds of two teachers. Both work with young children, but their words have impact well beyond the ages with which they work.

Geneva Lariviere teaches fourth grade at the Shaftsbury Elementary School in Shaftsbury. Below, she describes the integration of various resource people into her social studies program:

"We begin the school year in the Allyn and Bacon text *Agriculture: Man and the Land* Part One: Muscles to Machines traces the development of tools in food getting by Early Man through how Early Agriculture Changes Men's Lives and old and new methods of agriculture. As we study Early Man we learn how he used what was at hand in his environment as he first made tools with sticks, stones, and vines. My children have made early man tools. First they found suitable sticks, stones and vines. Then using their wits and hands the children solved the problems involved in making reliable tools and hunting weapons with these materials. This project was done with the help of the Curriculum Workshop person, Jeanne McWaters. The children gained renewed respect for man's resourcefulness and early accomplishments as they worked to solve the problems of securely fastening their spear heads and constructing snares and nets. They began to look at the commonplace in their surroundings with an eye toward how reliable a stick or stone would be as a tool or weapon—judging edges, shapes, and sturdiness. They learned the importance of cooperation, division of labor, and specialists in a meaningful way. The children have since written of their experiences during the Early Man tools project with Mrs. McWaters and myself.

"We are now learning how early man continued to observe his sur-

roundings. His observations along with trial and error led him to agriculture—the growing of plants and raising of animals. We have read of the early agricultural tools and methods. The children will soon be making dioramas and murals illustrating slash and burn agriculture, plant selection, harvesting, the storing and defending of crops, as well as the use of animals for work.

"I've planned a trip to *Topping Tavern Museum* in Shaftsbury under the guidance of curator Mr. Blakely. There we will see early Vermont farming tools, many of them once used in Shaftsbury. Later I hope to have John Page, our U.V.M. County Extension Agent in to discuss the three main phases of Vermont farming in the last 200 years. He has prepared three fifteen minute tapes on this subject we may be able to use. A visit to a modern farm supply store as well as a modern farm, perhaps with the help of Mr. Page or a farmer parent, would bring the children into the present "World of Work" and acquaint them with tools used in that work today.

"The Shaftsbury Garden Club with Mrs. Bucknall will help us make Mini-Gardens giving us advice on soil preparation and plant care as well as record keeping."

Helene Mello has been a kindergarten teacher in Wilmington for several years. Her language arts program is a central element of her curriculum and she uses many of the books she reads out loud to lead the children into other activities. Below are excerpts from her unit on *Winnie the Pooh,* by A.A. Milne, used as a central theme for a class:

The following activities were correlated with the readings—

"In Which We Are Introduced to Winnie the Pooh and Some Bees . . ." Science: Air and Balloons—What made Pooh go up? down? What happened when the balloon broke? Bees: We saw a beehive and related equipment and a mother brought in a queen bee she had just purchased. We felt the wax that was collected from the inside of the hive. The children made wax balls and we discussed the making of candles from bees wax. Over the next few days, some or all of the class were involved in:

identifying the members of the hive;
drawing pictures showing the difference between queen, worker and drones;
discussing the reproduction of bees;
discussing the relation of bees to fruit and flower production;
tasting honey on bread that we had made in class;
making clay honey pots with the help of high school art dept.

"Pooh and Piglet Go Hunting and Nearly Catch a Wozzle" Science: We did all types of printing with hands, fruits, and numerous objects. We made pictures of people running and walking to show different

foot placement. We looked at footprints in the snow and made footprints of each animal in the Pooh stories.

"In Which Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets into a Very Tight Place" This chapter offers many possibilities for discussing and drawing animal homes. We made several models of homes and viewed a number of filmstrips.

"In Which Piglet is Entirely Surrounded by Water" In this chapter, flooding and rainstorms become very important. We were able to talk about spring flooding in Vermont and to discuss the power and force of water. We could have invited parents or grandparents to join us and show pictures of the devastating flood of 1938, but we were not able to arrange this.

The class also completed some more general activities, centering on aspects of *Winnie the Pooh*. Here are a few of them:

1. We made a map of the "100 Aker Woods" showing the places of each adventure.
2. We used the map to retell stories and to trace the movements of the animals.
3. Using overlays and the overhead projector, children traced their favorite character on a large piece of paper (hand-eye coordination).
4. Many children dictated their own versions of the story to me. We collected these and bound them into a book.
5. The children did several dramatizations. Even in their free play, we found them moving into the Pooh characters.
6. As part of physical education, the children had a fine time being Bouncy Tigers, Pooh Bears, buzzing bees, and so on.

COMMUNITY STUDIES AND CHILDREN'S WRITING

Across the country, the protests grow about poor writing amongst high school and college graduates. The difficulties many students face in writing a complete sentence or preparing a sensible report have to do with their school experiences but are even more the result of other influences. Changing family patterns, television, and a decreasing interest in reading have taken their toll.

Teachers have fairly little impact outside the school, but there is a great deal we can do about improving written expression on a day by day basis in the school curriculum. One excellent way to encourage students to write about something of value to them is to arrange for experiences in the local community that are meaningful and offer subjects to write about.

Below, we offer some specific suggestions for encouraging writing, based on Community Studies. But it is important to realize that good writing will occur in our classrooms only if we create an environment that encourages it regularly and a schedule that permits a reasonable amount of time for writing. We must have a broad definition of writing in schools, based on more than assigned topics and responses to stock questions.

In the summer of 1976, 23 southern Vermont teachers laid plans for improving the writing curricula in their schools during a University of Vermont in-service course. The course revealed many difficulties that teachers face in enabling students to write comfortably and well in elementary and high schools. Among the problems voiced frequently were:

—finding enough time in the school day to allow the student to develop an idea and bring the writing to a reasonable conclusion;
—subject matter: how do we structure an assignment that brings out some good writing without assigning a binding topic?
—convincing students that they have a need to write in modern society;
—and the broad realm of motivation.

The teachers in the course began to develop solutions to these and other problems through what many called, "personal writing." This term focuses on personal expression and involves allowing the student to explore emotions, feelings and concerns on paper. This can be done only if the teacher can encourage a variety of writing activities in the classroom, some of which need to be on-going, such as journals.

Much of the work that takes place in a Community Studies program can involve personal writing in some form. The list of writing ideas below attempts to show some of these possibilities:

Writing based on the senses—

Describing a rock collection on the basis of touch;

The smells of a portion of the town, perhaps where there are restaurants or factories;

The taste of various tree saps, tapped near the school;

The sounds of an area in the community, or the contrast of two areas:

Writing about a small area of the community that is very special for the student;

Writing about an area that is feared—because of a person or condition there;

Role playing, followed by writing about the experience;

Interviews, followed by write-ups or reaction papers (how did you feel about your role in the interview process?);

Stories based on personification of someone in the community (imagine yourself as a particular worker, elderly citizen, self-sufficient farmer, etc.)

Group writing—line by line or in teams—about an event in the community (a fair, a fire, a controversial meeting);

Reporting on a local event;

Journals—kept daily, these reflect the concerns of the students, are based on immediately personal events, and may need to remain private unless the student wants to show them to someone;

Oral history projects, delving into the local lore, crafts, and traditions, especially through older residents;

Directions on: how to pursue a craft, apply for a local job, get to someone's house;

Reports, sometimes accompanied by art work, graphs, or charts, based on natural history projects.

The options are endless and can only be explored by you in your local school. It is vital to recognize that possibilities for writing and the motivation that is required for writing are available on a large scale in the community near your school. Some of the options require field work. Some can be pursued right in the classroom. Others can be assigned to students in the fashion of homework.

Writing is an activity that demands the student work at his own pace. The teacher must arrange to accomodate that pace in the course of the school day or at other times. Writing also requires substantial support from the teacher and a sample of writing that suggests any effort at all on the part of the student must be treated with respect. A quick attack from the red pencil only assures that the next assignment

will be done with less personal energy and with more concern for grades and the teacher's needs. Or, it may not be done at all.

There is a further caution that we must consider when focusing on the community as a source for writing and as a motivating element for the student:

Immediately after an experience, a field trip, an interview, or whatever, may NOT be the correct time to demand writing from a group of students.

Some form of follow-up is vital after an experience, but it may be a discussion, a series of projects, or some other format. The best writing about an experience often comes days after the event.

As teachers, we must find ways to help students spot this moment and then give them the option to write at that time. Forcing writing on students in a regular pattern does not make eager writers in most cases.

RECORD KEEPING

As classroom teachers, we sometimes forget that others can learn and benefit from our successes and failures. One way to share ideas and activities is to maintain some form of record keeping or documentation system in the school. This can be shared by a group of teachers doing community oriented work or by the whole school. In other words, it can be public or, if you feel uncomfortable about that, the record keeping system can be the property of a small group.

The method described here was developed for use in our Community Studies project, but it has been adapted to a number of situations by other teachers. It is no more than a card file, kept in a convenient place. The cards inside are printed (xeroxed, dittoed, or any other system that works) with an outline for documentation. Anyone involved in this record keeping system enters a card when they complete an activity, unit, or project. Below are two examples:

Class: Mrs. Larsen--3rd date: 3.10/76

ACTIVITY:
Game--putting parts of seeds together
discussion of growth, need for cotyledons, embry development
our use of seeds, Started radish seeds with small group, various
growth factors, heat, cold dark. Planted potato eyes, carrot tops, etc.

MATERIALS:
parts (cut-out) of seed, dirt, vegs for planting, radish seeds

TIME REQUIRED:
30 min.

PRE-PLANNING:
making game, having charts of potato, seeds

FOLLOW-UP NEEDED:
watching and recording growth
more discussion of seeds we eat--trip to whole grain stores.

EVALUATION:
useful project, but it needs regular follow-up. A team for watering and measurement of growth would be useful.

Class/Group:	Date:
4th-5th Green	Nov. 24, '75

Activity:
Visit with small group to Clear Solutions, Guilford, VT.--
plastics firm.
Got 700 lbs. scrap for crafts at school.
Kids were taught to join, cut, and bend plastic.

Materials:
none for trip

Time Required:
2½ hours

Follow-up Needed:
Work with material in school, largely as arts and crafts work
Possible visit to another type of plastics firm.

Evaluation (usefulness; would you do it again? with others?)
(Career Ed implications?):
Excellent example of small group trip. Two kids very taciturn at start -- exceptionally talkative on return trip because they held a few pieces of material and played with shapes, possibilities.

This kind of record keeping system takes little time and has an easy format to deal with. It offers many benefits:

1. After a short while, it becomes a fine resource file;
2. It gives you up to date documentation to illustrate or prove what you have been doing;
3. It demonstrates continuity and planning, while countering the criticism that your community oriented work may be just fun field trips, unrelated to "school work."
4. The record keeping system is often personally satisfying.
5. The system can be used by one teacher or a number of teachers at one time.

Record keeping—about the things you do, about the individual children you work with—is often forgotten in schools. One teacher who is concerned about record keeping has adapted this card file system to her own classroom on a day-by-day basis. This system, or another you feel comfortable with might prove valuable in your setting.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL RESOURCES

After making many attempts at a community resource list applicable to teachers throughout the state, we've almost concluded the task is impossible. Individuals, public service organizations, and businesses can only be resources if they relate to the interests of you the teacher and your students. What is being investigated and the type of community you live in determines what resources can be used. We feel confident that Vermont and its communities are small enough so that teachers can find interested local individuals and organizations who are willing to share their time and skills with students. Since each teacher, classroom, and community is unique, we can only give you a generalized list of places to begin to tap your local resources.

Contact:

1. The Chamber of Commerce for names of industries and businesses in your area.
2. The County Extension Service Home Economist for the names of local crafts persons.
3. The County Extension Service Agriculturalist for the names of agricultural experts.
4. The Vermont Historical Society in Montpelier for a list of historically important sites.
5. Your Town Librarian for local history experts.
6. A local Museum or College for the names of writers and artists.
7. Government Agencies concerning their services and functions.
8. Public Utilities concerning their services and functions.
9. Environmental Organizations and other human interest organizations.
10. Local Newspapers for names and addresses of interesting individuals and agencies.
11. Town organizations such as a planning commission, historical society, or preservation group.
12. Local or regional associations of craftspeople for list of members near you.

In Vermont, we have a wealth of resources. The most common problem is to find them in each locality. In most cases, the best resources are those people and places in the immediate community. Traveling great distances is only worthwhile if you are sure the person or place is interesting enough and is an invaluable link in your curriculum.

In addition to the general list above, you may have found ideas for types of people and places in the section of the booklet describing projects in Vermont schools.